



**Florida State
University**

College of Information

**Website Redesign
Project**

Group S:

Virginia Morris Stephen Tyson

Rashan Young Dustin Holland

<http://2006.ispace.ci.fsu.edu/dmh06e/html/IS/>

College of Information Website Redesign Project



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Client and Audience Analysis



In This Section

An analysis of the wants and needs of both the client (The College of Information) and the end user.

This analysis focuses on the FSU College of Information website and investigates the wants and needs of both the sponsors and the audience. The objective of this analysis is to isolate the redundant, unnecessary, or counterproductive features of the College of Information website from the ones that are useful, and discuss possible ways of integrating them into a new site design that will benefit all parties. Additionally, this analysis should help ensure that upon redesign, information is attainable through the website in the most logical, efficient way possible to all but the most obscure of users.

It is important at this time to note that no polling of faculty, students, or other parties took place prior to or following this analysis. All information, solutions, and conclusions presented are based on obvious requirements, educated guesses, or assumptions and reflect the consensus of our group.

The sponsor group of the College of Information, the College of Information Staff and supporting parties and universities, has a number of “wants” that they expect from the College of Information website. The College of Information seeks to allow access to and use of Information which provides students with a broad knowledge of many information fields, such as Information Architecture, Information Management, and Information Technology, among others.

The wants of the College of Information department also include their goals. FSU seeks to provide high quality instruction in all of its degree programs as a foundational goal of the College, and seeks to assure that this goal is met through recruitment, selection, retention, and evaluation of faculty, staff, and students. The College fosters faculty, staff, and student research through the encouragement of collaboration, grant and contract seeking, and through

support of its Information Use Management and Policy Institute.

Along with those wants, the College of Information has a number of needs that should be filled by the website. The College of Information needs to be able to provide accessible information 24/7 to meet the needs of student and faculty engaged in instruction and research. Inability to meet this need not only makes the College of Information look bad on the surface, but could also severely inconvenience students and faculty, or even turn away prospective students or sponsors. This need should be treated as a priority, as effects of its neglect could be devastating.

The College of Information also needs to provide students with the ability to access the information in an organized and logical manner. Information that cannot be located is no better than not having any information at all. Providing incoming students a chance to review and research the importance of information science as well as the society benefits should also be treated as a priority as this will increase the number of new degree-seeking students and perpetuate the mission of the College. These provisions are necessary for recruitment and retention of information science professionals through out the world.

The College of Information needs to be able to provide students with instruction and experience in cutting edge technology for acquiring, storing, organizing and delivering information to meet human needs, as well as providing guidance for students who are perusing a degree in the Information Science field. Secondary needs include providing relations and correspondence with Alumni and friends of the college, as well as providing resources and support for faculty and staff.

Moving on to discuss the users, or audience, of the College of Information website, we

will first discuss the assumptions that have been made about this group. For the purpose of this analysis, we have assumed that users include current and prospective students, graduate students, faculty and staff, and college partners. We have also assumed that users are technologically competent on at least a basic level and possess a slightly above-average knowledge of the Internet and website navigation.

Current students and graduate students use the site to access information about different courses, information about the courses needed for a particular degree, computer requirements for the laptop computers required by the department, to access news and announcements, to access the MSDN software website, and access information about advisors, as well as assorted other tasks. Prospective students access the College of Information website to learn more about the degrees offered and to learn more about the different classes offered. The College of Information website often acts as the “first impression” the College makes on prospective students, making it an important factor in bringing in new students. Faculty and staff access the website to obtain information about employment and to access news and announcements posted by the College of Information. College partners access the site to find out what is happening in the college and find out more information about the college.

On the most basic level, users need for the site to be as “user friendly” as possible. Initial observations show the flash navigation on the home page to be confusing and redundant. Students and graduate students will find that at any one time, there are two sets of links which say undergraduate and graduate, but neither link refers to the same resource. If the links were better labeled and more descriptive, the site would be more user friendly. Our group encourages the consideration of completely removing the flash navigation, as we feel anything gained by its dynamic content is outweighed by confusion and redundancy.

Countless times in a college student's college career, the student will find themselves working at all hours of the day and night, including weekends, on their various school projects. This implies that a student needs for information to be accessible all of the time, which means unquestionable reliability is demanded of the College of Information website.

From a prospective student's view, information about the programs offered by different colleges within a university should be readily available and easily accessible without having to sift through unnecessary "fluff" or information intended for other groups of users. Additionally, if the prospective student already attends the university, they need the most information available to make decisions about their future career.

When the undergraduate link is selected, the user sees a page full of links that are about a 10 or 12 point font. Our group is of the opinion that there are too many links presented, and more important links do not stand out. The user is presented with such an overwhelming quantity of links that it could lead to frustration, as it makes navigating the site difficult. Since the links section is divided into groups, we feel that the links could be consolidated and these groups made expandable to reduce clutter. This could be accomplished VIA Java, XML, or other programming solutions.

The site is also bland in appearance and could use a some "jazzing up," so to speak. As previously mentioned, we feel a user wants to see important links stand out to provide better direction on where they might be interested in going. More graphics could be implemented in the navigation, possibly as a way to differentiate between groups, and would add more depth to the overall visual appearance of the website.

The College of Information and the users of the website both desire a comprehensive, logical, friendly, convenient, functional, and reliable online resource that is available to everyone and appears as if it were personally tailored to individual users needs. Beyond this broad “want,” we found that the wants of the sponsor and user are inherently different, but are not in conflict with one another.

The College of Information needs to provide accessible information to the students and faculty 24 hours a day, seven days per week, and the users would like to have access to the information contained in the College of Information's website at all times of the day and night. Here, the goals of the College and the User match. Both want the user of the website to have access to the information at all times. This is important because anything with a company's name on it adds to or takes away from its reputation depending on how reliable the website is or is not. A reliable website is beneficial to both the sponsor and the user, and is, as mentioned, a top priority of consideration.

The College of Information also needs to provide prospective students with information about information science and the College. Prospective Students need to have access to information about the college's programs in order to make informed decisions about their future careers. In providing this information, the College not only is recruiting students over the internet (which reduces the amount of money the College spends on recruitment), but the college is also providing information about the College's programs to Prospective Faculty, Current Faculty, Current Students, Alumni, and College Partners.

The College of Information's website is the beginning and continuation with someone's interaction with the school. Whether clients are potential students, current students, faculty, or

partners of the college, they all rely upon the website's content to stay in touch and up to date with their respectable branch of the school. The College of Information has their website up for this purpose solely; a purpose which branches down to every other aspect of Information Science and Information Technology. Accomplishing this requires few things, including organization and currency. Not accomplishing this, however, will ultimately reduce the college's performance in all criteria.

The College of Information's website should be able to first answer all the questions of the clients; from the physical locations of classes and offices, to as scrupulous a topic as personal login capabilities. Because the website is the main portal to the college, it should be flawless in functionality. The site should remain updated in order to avoid miscommunication, invalid time-sensitive data, and potentially the loss of clientele.

Although focuses for the website do include what it should accomplish as a whole, it should not be relied upon for all concerns. Some concerns are better off answered by an individual and not a program, giving a more personal relationship with clientele that desire such things. The website would then only provide contact information of appropriate personnel, and nothing more. Other things it should not do is assume that clients are connected to their website via high speed access. Many companies lose potential business with people on slower connections (dialup, dsl lite) due to bandwidth-intensive programming and flash introductions.

In the end, determining what the website should and should not accomplish is very simple. However, it is the first step in a ladder that leads to success. Therefore, to reach such a level, the first step should be solid.



Usability Analysis

In This Section

Goals of the College of Information

Script and questions which will be given to users in order to test the website

Goals:

- FSU seeks to provide high quality instruction in all of its degree programs as a foundational goal of the College, and seeks to assure that this goal is met through recruitment, selection, retention, and evaluation of faculty, staff, and students. The College fosters faculty, staff, and student research through the encouragement of collaboration, grant and contract seeking, and through support of its Information Use Management and Policy Institute.
- To be able to provide accessible information 24/7 to meet the needs of student and faculty engaged in instruction and research.
- To provide Students with the ability to access the information in an organized and logical manner.
- To be able to provide students with instruction and experience in cutting edge technology for acquiring, storing, organizing and delivering information to meet human needs, as well as providing guidance for students who are perusing a degree in the Information Science field.

To provide relations and correspondence with Alumni and friends of the college, as well as providing resources and support for faculty and staff.

Script:

"Hi, my name is _____, and I will be working with you today in evaluating Group S' prototype website. First of all, I would like to thank you for time you have volunteered to participate in this test. Now, I will explain a little bit about our project, and then you will have a chance to ask me questions before we begin the test.

Each group in the Information Science class was asked to develop a new website for the College of Information. That is what we will be testing today, In order to test the site we will be asking you to perform a few typical tasks at the web site. Navigate the site as you would normally navigate any website. Do your best, but be aware that this is a test of the web site, not you, because the web site is still under development. We are not testing you; we are testing the product.

You may ask questions at any time, but I might not answer them fully since this is a study of the web site and how well it functions with a typical user like you. Therefore, we need you to work independently to a great extent. Please verbalize your thoughts as you progress through the tasks. This is important because our goal is to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the website from a user's perspective.

During today's test, I'll be asking you to complete some tasks and to answer some

questions. I will be writing your answers and my observations about the navigability of the website. Please remember that you can quit the test at any time for any reason and that we will not hold this against you.

Do you have any questions?

Test:

There are a total of 8 questions.

Let's begin by assuming you are a student for the first part of the test and an alumnus for the second part.

You are a prospective student seeking a degree in the Information Science field. You locate the College of Information web site <http://2006.ispace.ci.fsu.edu/dmh06e/html/IS/>

Q1. You want to find out what Degrees are offered in the related fields of Information Science, what do you do?

Q2. Once you have chosen your degree, you want to find out which courses are required for earning the degree you chose. What do you do?

Q3. You have chosen to attend FSU and study at the College of Information. You have a need for financial assistance, using <http://2006.ispace.ci.fsu.edu/dmh06e/html/IS/> how would you find financial assistance?

Q4. You have gained financial assistance and now wish to sign up for selected courses, How do you do this?

Q5. You have been accepted into the College of Information and received financial assistance; you now wish to purchase a laptop but do not know the requirements. How do you find them?

In this scenario you are an alumnus to donate funds to the College of Information for the better of society. You start at <http://2006.ispace.ci.fsu.edu/dmh06e/html/IS/>

Q6. You wish to make a gratuitous donation to the College of Information, but first you would like to see a list of accomplishments and maybe some existing research. How would you do this?

Q7. You want to find out where to make the donation and to whom, what do you do?

Q8. You are an alumnus and wish to update your contact information. What do you do?



Usability Test

In This Section

The results of the usability analysis

The Usability Test has been proven to be way far more beneficial than our group has imagined. Initially, among the subjects we gathered for this test, our prior guess as to outcomes and results of the analysis were that each and every person's responses were going to be the same. However, as with each subject being of different backgrounds and status (i.e. alumni, graduate student, undergraduate student, and commercial/business personnel) so were their responses. Results from each question had negative and positive attributes, all which help our group ultimately prepare for a better, more functional website.

Firstly, each and every subject was asked of their initial response of the opening index.html. The majority agreed to its simplicity; some arguing that the simplicity was a negative aspect and should be more modern/flashy, while most approved of its structure, expressing how its simplicity keeps the user from being distracted away from his or her initial purpose of accessing the website. We as a group concurred, noting the fact that some clientele could possibly be displeased by our style, however at the same time keeping in mind that a utilitarian approach would require us to refrain from any layout-based change. This site is a site dedicated to providing scholastic information and announcements.

Regarding the eight specific questions we asked our subjects, a few problems did arise, those that are in the process of rectification. Question one was a very straight-forward question, and many users agreed that the frame on the left-hand side of the site included a menu that would be used access their related fields of Information Science. Everyone agreed as that being the first step. However, in terms of accessing appropriate data, our site had no specific information for each field, which leads to question number two's results. All subjects had the same response, that due to the links being inactive, it was impossible to complete the question. This is something we as a group were aware of, and in no means was it due to erroneous programming

or such. Our structure was designed in a way that once actual material was placed in its respective link, it would be uploaded right where it needed to be, and the subjects agreed that the problem was simply our group not being at that point in our website production.

Question three deals with an issue our group has not corrected yet, and that is looping. One subject, responding to question three, followed the link to the about us page, finding no information regarding financial aid. That subject then recalled a link on the “prospective students” page that involved financial aid. That subject then proceeded to access that page, but did so by using the browser’s back button. A “home” link was not available was not noticeable enough for the user to click on that, which after numerous pages of searching would prove to be a major issue. This is something that our group plans on correcting in the future.

Questions four and five both deal with the same issue. Subjects found that both course signup and College of Information specific pages were unable to be found. Most gave up searching for this, after looking through each link from the home page. This is mainly due to actual material not being added to the site. Our site map indeed includes locations where these sites would be, so the group’s issue is simply producing a finished website.

The final three questions involved subjects locating and accessing the correct links to their respective questions, however incapable to present an answer due to actual information not existing on our page. Again, these are materials our website would not include at its current level in production, but something that is planned to be completed during the sites upcoming revisions.

In conclusion, our group has learned a lot from the subjects diverse and variant purposes for accessing the site. Nothing particularly unusual happened during the test, which was good.

Each site opens correctly, and each link redirected to their respective locations. At the time of the test, we had not fully completed the website therefore, many of the questions could not be fully answered. All three levels of the website are now functional, and we have replaced our placeholder pages with a representation of the actual material that would be contained on the website. Format and structure of the website, in our opinion as well as the majority of our subjects, did suffice and were suiting for the College of Information's homepage.